

Planning/Assessment Tool Kit: Neighborhood Windshield Survey

How-to Guidance

Overview

A windshield survey can be a good way to collect baseline data about the dog poop situation in the area you wish to target for your scoop-the-poop campaign. **Conduct the survey before you begin the campaign so that you will have first-hand knowledge of conditions in the area.** You can also get a general sense of people's scooping behavior during the survey. While conducting the survey you can make observations about the general area, interview residents, take photos, record information about dog walkers, and note particular problem areas such as a specific park or playing field where poop is not being scooped.

Materials

- [Field sheets \(see attached example\)](#)
- Clipboard & pencil
- Maps of the area
- Camera
- Flashlight

Method

1. Getting started: Gather your materials. Make sure you have at least two people to conduct the survey. Use the maps to establish a driving or walking route for your survey area. Travel your route and use the field sheet to record observations.

2. Local dog population: Try to get a sense of where dogs live in the neighborhood. Do you observe dog houses, tie out areas, or kennels with more than one dog? It may be helpful to get information about the number of registered dogs in the study area before you conduct the survey.

3. Storm drains & other areas: You will want to stop at each storm drain and look down into the drain to see if people are throwing used poop bags down the drain¹. Use the flashlight to get a better view. If you observe bags in storm drains, this may indicate that people in the study area are not aware that the water carried by storm drains is discharged directly to rivers and streams without treatment. Also check at road crossings where streams flow under the road and other places such as the edges of fields and woods where people may toss the bags.



4. Problem areas: Check the survey area for “problem” spots. Are there parks or playing fields where dogs are allowed to run free and poop isn’t scooped? If trash barrels

¹ During a windshield survey for a scoop-the-poop project in Massachusetts, over ten bags of dog waste were found in storm drains.

are present at the parks or playing fields, look in the barrel. Do you see evidence of poop-scooping behavior (such as poop baggies)? Are there special places in the area where people are more likely to walk dogs (you can learn this by talking to residents)? Are these locations poop-free or covered with “land mines”?

5. Poop scooping behavior: Watch for dog walkers. Do you observe poop-scooping behavior: are dog walkers picking up after their dogs? If you have a chance, ask a poop-scooping dog walker if they think others in the area scoop dog waste and dispose of it properly. Most poop-scooping dog owners are proud of their behavior and will tell you a lot about the dogs and owners in the study area!

6. Land use: Record the local land use types. Are there areas with condominiums? Do the condos allow residents to keep dogs? Are there places where the land use is mostly commercial where dogs may not be present? Are there schools in the study area? Is there a pet store or veterinarian in

the neighborhood? Having a sense of the local land use patterns will help you when it comes to planning your project activities. For example, if you discover that there is a school in your study area, you may want to work with the teachers and students as part of your project.



Summary

A windshield survey will provide a lot of valuable baseline data for your project. Through the survey you will gain information about local conditions and behaviors. Use this information to build a

foundation for your program. You may even wish to conduct a windshield survey as part of your post-project evaluation to determine if things have changed in your target area. See the sample field sheet on the next page to begin planning your windshield survey. Good luck and happy dog watching!

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Example Tally Sheet

(Tip: Leave space at top of tally sheet to allow for clipboard clip)

Windshield Survey

Date: _____

Observer's Name(s): _____

Name of Study Area Location: _____

Prevalent land use types in the study area? (Residential, condos, commercial, agricultural, etc.)

Current weather: _____ Weather past 24 hours: _____

Evidence of Dog Population in the Neighborhood:

Dogs (unaccompanied) _____

Dog Houses: _____ Dog Tie-Out Areas: _____

Dog Kennels: _____ Other: _____

Tally of Dog-Walkers Observed: _____ # with Poop Bags: _____

Tally of Storm Drains Observed: _____ # with Discarded Bags of Poop: _____

Problem Areas — (Tally # of bags discarded and/or piles of droppings)

Creeks/Brooks: _____

Road Crossings: _____

Playing Fields: _____

Parks: _____

Other common areas (condos, walking trails, sidewalks, etc.): _____

Comments (continue on back if needed): _____
